

Message Text

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ACTION SCI-06

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TAGS: TECH, TGEN

SUBJECT: URANIUM ENRICHMENT

REF: STATE 26533

FOR SCI; PASS AEC

SUMMARY: RECENT STATEMENT BY FRENCH PRIME MINISTER SHOWS FRENCH ARE READY TO EXPLOIT CURRENT EUROPEAN FUEL PINCH IN ORDER TO PUSH THEIR PROPOSED MULTINATIONAL GASEOUS DIFFUSION ENRICHMENT PLANT. HE IS REPORTED ALSO TO HAVE SAID PRIVATELY THAT FRENCH WILL BUILD THE PLANT BY THEMSELVES IF NECESSARY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER MESSMER STATED ON NOVEMBER 3 THAT THE "SOLIDARITY IN ENERGY MATTERS IS NOT ONLY THAT OF THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY BUT ALSO THAT OF THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, AND, FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXAMPLE, THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN URANIUM ISOTOPIC SEPARATION

PLANT. THAT IS ALSO EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY."

2 MESSMER MADE THIS STATEMENT ON A VISIT HE AND MINISTER OF INDUSTRIAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT CHARBONNEL MADE TO BURGUNDY. FRENCH DAILY, LE MONDE, IN DESCRIBING CONVERSATIONS MESSMER HAD WITH LOCAL POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS, COMMENTS THAT "HE DECLARED HIMSELF RESOLVED TO EXPLOIT THE PRESENT CRISIS IN ORDER TO PROPOSE TO OUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS A REAL COMMON POLICY OF ENERGY AND NOT JUST OF PETROLEUM. IT APPEARS THAT MESSMER WILL DECIDE SOON TO BUILD AN ISOTOPE SEPARATION PLANT---. IF THE EUROPEAN PARTNERS OF FRANCE DO NOT WANT TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH IT, FRANCE, ASSURED THE PRIME MINISTER, WILL UNDERTAKE ITS REALIZATION ALONE."

3. COMMENT: MESSNER'S PUBLIC STATEMENT CLEARLY INDICATES IMPORTANCE FRENCH ATTACH TO THE PROPOSAL TO BUILD A EUROPEAN GASEOUS DIFFUSION PLANT TO ENRICH URANIUM. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO LE MONDE'S CHIEF SCIENCE WRITER, THE REPORT INDICATING THAT THE FRENCH WILL PROCEED INDEPENDENTLY IF NECESSARY IS BASED ON PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN A REPORTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER, AND SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN THE SAME WEIGHT AS A PUBLIC STATEMENT. NEVERTHELESS, IT SQUARES WITH OUR ASSESSMENT (REF. A PARA 7). IT IS LIKELY, HOWEVER, AS ONE OF CHARBONNEL'S STAFF ADVISED US THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS NOT REACHED A FIRM DECISION ON THE POSSIBILITY OF BUILDING THE PLANT INDEPENDENTLY AND WILL NOT DO SO UNTIL THE QUESTION OF EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION IS RESOLVED. CEA ADMINISTRATOR TOLD SCICON THAT PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD COST TEN BILLION FRANCS (SEVEN BILLION FOR

THE GASEOUS DIFFUSION PLANT AND THREE BILLION FOR THE REQUIRED ELECTRICAL POWER. (IN SAME CONVERSATION, HE EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR U. S. TECHNICAL COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH ON GASEOUS DIFFUSION TECHNOLOGY.) THE TWO BILLION DOLLAR PRICE TAG, FOLLOWING THE ONE AND ONE-THIRD BILLION DOLLARS SPENT ON THE CONCORDE, IS CERTAIN TO GENERATE OPPOSITION AT THE FINANCE MINISTRY. IT WILL JUST AS CERTAINLY IMPEL THE FRENCH TO PULL OUT ALL STOPS IN THEIR DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO OBTAIN EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION IN THE CAPITAL FINANCING OF THE PROJECT. MESSMER'S PUBLIC STATEMENT (PARA. 1) MAY WELL BE AIMED AT THE EC SUMMIT MEETING OF DECEMBER 15, ORIGINALLY CALLED FOR BY PRESIDENT POMPIDOU. THE FRENCH HOPE TO REACH A DECISION ON THE PROPOSED PROJECT BEFORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE END OF 1973.
IRWIN

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